

Message Text

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UNCLAS STATE 313382 TOSEC 340131

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT JOHN SAAR BYLINER WASHINGTON POST
THURSDAY DECEMBER 30 HEADED "SEOUL COURT UPHOLDS PROMINENT
DISSIDENTS' CONVICTION."

2. SEOUL, DEC. 29--A SEOUL APPEALS COURT TODAY CONFIRMED
THE CONVICTIONS OF 18 LEADING CHRISTIAN DISSIDENTS FOR
POLITICAL CRIMES BUT REDUCED THEIR SENTENCES FOR UNSTATED
REASONS. THE CASE IS A CENTRAL ELEMENT IN THE GROWING
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN IN SOUTH KOREA.

3. THE HEARING TODAY ENDED WITH A SHOW OF DEFIANCE BY
THE DEFENDANTS. SPECTATORS RETURNED THE SMILES AND WAVES
OF THE DEPARTING PRISONERS AND MADE THE COURTHOUSE RING
WITH CHEERS, APPLAUSE AND THE SINGING OF THE KOREAN
NATIONAL ANTHEM.

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4. KIM DAE JUNG, 51, WHO ALMOST BECAME HIS COUNTRY'S
PRESIDENT IN THE 1971 ELECTION, MADE LIGHT OF HIS FIVE-YEAR
SENTENCE: "THANK YOU EVERYONE, WE SHALL FIGHT TO THE LAST
AND WIN," HE SHOUTED WHILE BEING LED AWAY.

5. THE DEFENDANTS WERE CONVICTED IN AUGUST OF VIOLATING AN EMERGENCY DECREE THAT OUTLAWS POLITICAL OPPOSITION. THEY WERE ACCUSED OF SEEKING THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG HEE AND THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY DURING A SERVICE--MARCH 1--IN SEOUL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC MYONGDONG CATHEDRAL. THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS IT WAS AN ATTEMPT TO START A POPULAR REBELLION AGAINST PARK.

6. FROM THE OUTSET, THE TRIAL HAS BEEN A STRUGGLE OF WILLS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND A GROUP OF LEADERS WHO ARE THE KERNEL OF SOUTH KOREA'S DEMOCRATIC REARGUARD.

7. THE SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT HAS COME UNDER U.S. CONGRESSIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM FOR THE PROSECUTION. ACCORDING TO WESTERN OBSERVERS, SEOUL WOULD LIKE TO FIND SOME CONVENIENT RESOLUTION OF THE CASE BEFORE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS TEST THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES ON MORALITY IN FOREIGN POLICY. BUT THE CONTINUED DEFINANCE OF THE DEFENDANTS INDICATES THAT THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT SILENCE AS THE PRICE OF RELEASE OR TOKEN SENTENCES.

8. ATTENTION WILL INCREASINGLY TURN TO POSSIBLE CARTER ADMINISTRATION ATTITUDES SINCE THE SITUATION OF THE DEFENDANTS GOES LARGELY UNNOTICED WITHIN SOUTH KOREA.

9. (IN WASHINGTON, THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAID A U.S. "DEEP CONCERN FOR THIS CASE AND FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION" IN SOUTH KOREA HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO THE PARK GOVERNMENT PUBLICLY AND THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.)
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10. PRESIDING JUDGE CHUN PYUNG YUN REDUCED FROM EIGHT YEARS TO FIVE YEARS THE LOWER COURT SENTENCES OF KIM; FORMER PRESIDENT YUN PO SUN, 78; GHANDIAN PACIFIST HAM SOK HON; FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CHUNG II HYUNG AND FORMER PROF. MOON IK KWAN. NINE DEFENDANTS WHO HAD RECEIVED TWO-TO-FIVE-YEAR SENTENCES WERE GIVEN REDUCED SENTENCES OF ONE TO THREE YEARS. SENTENCES OF FOUR DEFENDANTS WERE SUSPENDED.

11. ELEVEN OF THE DISSIDENTS WERE RETURNED TO PRISON, WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN HELD FOR 10 MONTHS. SEVERAL OF THE OTHERS WHO REMAIN FREE EXPRESSED ANGER AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE OUTCOME AND SAID THEY WOULD APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT.

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12. "WE FEEL THIS IS A POLITICAL JUDGMENT," SAID CHUNG.
CELEBRATED LAWYER LEE TAE YOUNG, WHO IS CHUNG'S WIFE,
WAS EQUALLY CRITICAL DESPITE THE REDUCTION OF HER SENTENCE
FROM FIVE TO THREE YEARS. GESTURING IN FRUSTRATION,
SHE SAID, "THEY HAVE MADE US CRIMINALS FOR SPEAKING OUT,
WHICH IS WHAT PEOPLE SHOULD DO IN A DEMOCRACY."
(END TEXT)
ROBINSON

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